Immigration and employment: integration of immigrants

2003/2147(INI) - 15/01/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Claude MORAES (PES, United Kingdom) on the Commission Communication on immigration, integration. Parliament stated that the Communication signals the first time that even-handed consideration has been given to three vital and inter-related issues: - managing migration to the EU in a context of ageing working age populations; - improving the integration of migrants in the EU; and - the need for co-operation with countries of origin. The fight against illegal immigration and trafficking in people must not give rise to a repressive policy aimed at immigrants in irregular circumstances, but should, rather, target the traffickers and employers who exploit those circumstances. These issues go to the heart of the Lisbon agenda and its vision of mutually supportive employment, social and economic policies. On the one hand, migration and maximising employment are increasingly important for EU labour markets and economic growth. On the other, the integration of new migrants, established third country nationals and EU citizens of ethnic minority origin is becoming a key factor for social cohesion. Labour market issues are crucial but cannot be seen in isolation. Integration also depends on a range of other factors including the social context, education and language skills, civic participation, the involvement of civil society and the social partners, effective implementation of EU funding programmes to tackle labour market disadvantage, and proper implementation of the Article 13 anti-discrimination Directives. Parliament emphasized that different groups of migrants require different policies for integration. The latter concerns not only newly-arrived migrants but also long-term resident third country nationals and second and third generation migrants. This must be taken into account in policy-making. Parliament went on to discuss the EU's demographic/workforce challenge noting that the EU-25 working age population is set to shrink from 303m to 297m by 2020. The fall in total employment could have negative effects on economic growth, since economic growth is the result of growth in employment and productivity. Managed migration is part of the answer, along with higher birth rates. Parliament discussed the factors which might constitute managed migration, and emphasized that it cannot mean side-stepping the reforms of EU labour markets and education/training systems needed to increase employability (including of migrants). Member States should take urgent steps to shed light on illegal employment, especially in the domestic help sector, in which a very large number of female migrant workers are employed. A new solution must be found which permits families employing such workers to draw up a legal employment contract entitling them to social security cover. Parliament stated that many immigrant women have only derived rights through their husbands in their countries of origin. It is therefore crucial to ensure the individualisation of rights and benefits and an individual legal status for immigrant women. Finally, Parliament supported the proposals, in line with the open method of coordination, to promote the exchange of information, ideas and experiences regarding the integration andemployment of both new and existing immigrants. The European Parliament should have a strong role in this, and all relevant actors must be involved, including migrants' organizations.